

REMARKS

Claims 3-22 were presented for examination and were pending in this application. In the latest Office Action, claims 3-7, 9-13, 16-20, and 22 were rejected, and claims 8, 14, 15, and 21 were objected to as depending on a rejected base claim but otherwise allowable. With this amendment, claims 3, 6, 7, 9, and 16 are amended, and claims 4, 5, 13, and 20 are canceled. On the basis of the following remarks, consideration of this application and allowance of all pending claims are requested.

In the previous Office Action, claims 3-7, 9-13, 16-20, and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,808,610 to Benson et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,760,774 to Grossman et al. Applicant respectfully assert that the combination of Benson and Grossman proposed in that Office Action does not include each of the claimed limitations in the presently amended claims.

In particular, independent claim 3, as amended, now recites a method in which a plurality of elements in a graphical user interface each have “a core region selectable by a user to invoke one or more commands associated with the element and an edge region surrounding at least a portion of the core region.” When these elements are positioned so that their edge regions overlap, they are joined to form a group of elements, where the group of elements includes the core regions of the joined elements. It is noted that the user may invoke the commands of the joined elements because the group includes their respective core regions.

Independent claims 9 and 16, as amended, now recite a method and computer program product, respectively, for adjusting a graphical user interface of a computer program. The interface includes a plurality of elements, each of which includes “a functional core region that is

selectable using an input device to invoke the function(s) associated with the element" and "a dynamic edge that changes shape when the element is merged with one or more other elements, the dynamic edge forming a continuous dynamic edge with the dynamic edge(s) of the other element(s) merged therewith." When an element is positioned so that its dynamic edge overlaps the dynamic edge of another element, they elements are merged to form a group of elements, which includes the functional core regions of its constituent elements.

The claimed invention thus allows a user to manipulate the elements or controls of a software program to achieve an aesthetically pleasing and ergonomically functional graphical user interface. In the previous Office Action, Benson was cited for its disclosure of dockable panels, where two panels can be docked by moving one panel sufficiently close to another while holding down a special key. (Benson, col. 1, lines 23-25.) Because Benson maintains the original graphical form of the panels when they are docked, Grossman was cited for its teaching of modifying the appearance of a "master icon" when other icons are combined. As Grossman explains, "If it is determined that one or more icons should be consolidated, then the icons disappear and the master icon graphically changes as needed." (Grossman, col. 9, lines 10-12.) Accordingly, the previously proposed combination is "to alter the graphical appearance of Benson's proximity-merged 'elements' through the technique of Grossman."

It is respectfully asserted that the claimed invention, as amended, is not disclosed or suggested by this combination of Benson and Grossman for a number of reasons. For example, Benson was cited for its disclosure of docking panels when two panels are placed in proximity to each other. As Benson explains, this docking is performed by "dragging a first panel and dropping it in proximity with a second panel while holding down a modifier key." (See, e.g., Benson, Abstract.) The claimed invention operates in an entirely different way, using the

overlapping of edge regions of the elements and not requiring the user to hold down a modifier key. Moreover, the "docking wedge" disclosed in Benson does not suggest the claimed edge regions of the elements. Because Benson's panels do not have their own docking wedges, Benson does not suggest merging elements when their dynamic edges overlap. In fact, Benson's docking wedges do not appear until after it is determined that two panels should be joined.

In another example, Grossman was cited for its disclosure of modifying the appearance of the merged group of elements. Unlike Grossman, however, the group of elements of the claimed invention includes the core regions of the elements, allowing the user to continue to access the functionality and/or commands provided by the merged elements. This is not true in Grossman, which eliminates the icons from the screen. It is noted that Grossman is directed to reducing clutter on the screen, not to altering the ergonomics of elements that are to remain on the screen.

Based on the foregoing, the application is in condition for allowance of all claims, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. If the examiner believes for any reason direct contact would help advance the prosecution of this case to allowance, the examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned at the number given below.

Respectfully submitted,
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